

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

Fall 2006

A Volunteering Resource



Volunteer Diversity

How to Overcome Cultural Barriers

WORKSHOP:
A Fresh Look at
Identifying Volunteers

POINT OF VIEW:
Share Our Strength's Bill Shore

workshop

Practical Information to Provoke Ideas and Trigger Solutions

The Multi-Paradigm Model of Volunteering

A New Way to Identify and Manage Volunteers

Times, as the saying goes, they are a changin'. Today's institutions are impacted by 21st century cultural forces — changes in gender roles, the nature of family, marriage patterns, political shifts, the nature of work and the like.

And volunteering, as a sector, it's a changin', too. Like other institutions in society, volunteering is influenced by those same cultural shifts. The way people work today is different from 20 years ago. There is part-time, flex-time, job-share, consultant as worker, intermittent, telecommuting and seasonal work, to name a few. Those who experience flexibility in the workplace expect flexibility in their volunteer involvement.

To address these changes in volunteer patterns, Workshop author Nancy Macduff and colleague Mary Merrill developed a broad definition of four types of volunteering, into which almost any civic venture might fit. Their volunteering model was then shared with Virginia Commonwealth University professors F. Ellen Netting and Mary Katherine O'Connor, who then provided a theoretical underpinning for the model based on research from Netting and O'Connor's book, *Organization Practice: A Social Worker's Guide to Understanding Human Services*. This model is also based on the work of Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan in *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis: Elements of the Sociology of Corporate Life* and on the experiences of practitioners in the volunteer administration field.

From all the research, Macduff developed a practical application called the Multi-Paradigm of Volunteering, a theoretical construct that measures four basic categories of volunteers against two continuums of volunteer behavior. The graphic on page 32 illustrates how a volunteer category can range from subjectivism to objectivism on one continuum and its degree of stability to radical change on the other continuum.

The Workshops that follow introduce the Multi-Paradigm Model and define each of the four categories of volunteers — traditional, serendipitous, social-change and entrepreneurial — and give examples of the types of jobs appealing to the volunteer and implications for volunteer administration. ♦

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Resources

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Macduff, Nancy and F. Ellen Netting, Mary Katherine O'Connor, Mary Merrill, *Rethinking the Nature of Volunteerism: A Multi-Paradigmatic Approach to Volunteer Management*. (Paper presented at Association for Research on Nonprofits and Voluntary Action conference, Chicago, 2006) Free download at <http://arnova.omnibooksonline.com/2006/>

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An Introduction to the Multi-Paradigm Model of Volunteering

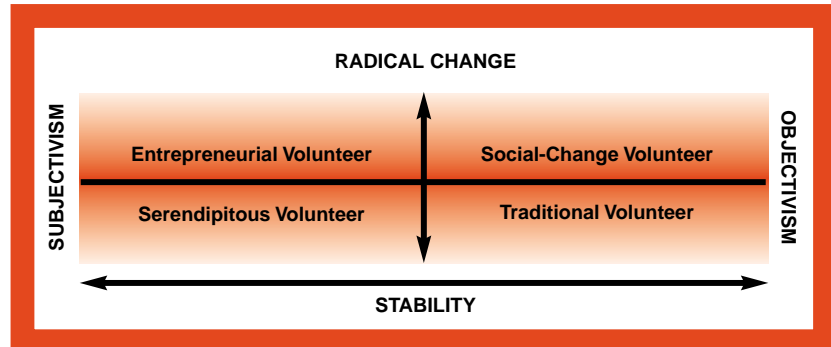
Over the past 100 years, organizations have formalized volunteering. Funding requirements, legal concerns and risk management issues have increasingly led to more formal structures and systems that often confine the work of volunteers within limited parameters.

At the same time that volunteering has become more structured, the service industry has embraced new categories of volunteers. Serendipitous, social-change and entrepreneurial volunteers have joined traditional ones. This increased and widespread variation in civic engagement demonstrates that volunteers have become interested in working outside of the formalized system and having more personalized experiences.

The Multi-Paradigm Model of Volunteering Diagram helps clarify this new world of volunteering. It takes the four basic categories of volunteer service — Traditional, Serendipitous, Social-Change and Entrepreneurial — and measures them against two continuums of volunteer behavior. One continuum shows a volunteer category's degree of subjectivism to objectivism, and the other, its degree of stability to radical change. Few volunteers are "pure" in any of the four categories, but rather fall somewhere along each of the two continuums.

Subjectivism to Objectivism Continuum

Based on the premise of Burrell and Morgan's work, the first continuum ranges from subjectivism to objectivism. A volunteer to the



subjectivism end of the continuum believes that people, not an external source, construct reality, and thus reality is subject to change. From his or her perspective, there are multiple ways of experiencing life, and because of that, difference is celebrated. The serendipitous and entrepreneurial volunteer fall into this category.

A highly subjective volunteer might expect the manager to be driven by the motivations and aspirations of its members or the mission of the organization.

The objectivism end of the continuum is based on the belief of seeking truth and direction from the larger environment — from some place different than oneself. For example, a volunteer who is at the far right end of the objectivism continuum might look for structure outside him or herself, appreciate a sense of order based on tangible facts or rules and enjoy regularity or standardization in the programs in which he or she participates. The volunteer might expect the administrator of volunteers to provide an ordered approach with clear rules and standards. The traditional and social change volunteer fall into this category.

Stability to Radical Change Continuum

The second continuum in this theoretical framework of volunteering ranges from stability to radical change. The volunteer at the stability (or control) portion of the continuum seeks order, wishing to preserve the status quo. These volunteers want a program with stability or incremental mechanisms for change that are predictable and obvious. Whether a volunteer is a subjectivist or an objectivist, they prefer an environment where he or she knows what to expect.

The volunteer at the radical change end of the continuum wants to achieve fundamental change. The volunteer accepts that change comes with conflict as new ideas and movements clash with existing structures. Volunteers who are interested in radical change seek volunteer programs that are stimulating and fit his or her vision of work and change. Volunteers at this end of the continuum seek organizations with advocacy goals. The difference between the volunteers on the subjective-to-objective continuum dictates whether the advocacy is individual or collective. ♦

Traditional Volunteering

Traditional volunteering is the kind most familiar to managers of volunteer programs, having been the mainstay of volunteering for more than 50 years. In its purist form, it is distinguished by stability and predictability. Because traditional volunteers enjoy constancy and incremental change in their form of volunteering, they appear at the bottom of the stability-to-radical change continuum of the Multi-Paradigm Model.

Traditional volunteer programs are characterized by orderliness, with activities that are concrete and predictable. The volunteer is comfortable with the fact that the details of the organization are outside of the individual's knowledge. The organization determines what volunteers do, organizing them based on the experiences and practices of those who went before.

Traditional volunteers provide consistent and regular services to many organizations. They arrive at assigned times, coming to the organization to carry out pre-arranged tasks, following a regular schedule. They are tutors in schools, greeters in hospitals, sales clerks in museum gift stores, missionaries commissioned to far-flung places and soccer coaches in youth leagues. These volunteers impact organizational programming in important and predictable ways. Organizations rely on their extended presence and their skilled services to assure program success.

The conventional wisdom is that traditional volunteers come to their assignment on a stable and regulated schedule — once a week

or once a month for a prescribed number of hours. But, traditional volunteers can serve episodically as well. The short-term volunteer group that comes from a local corporate program is an example of the traditional episodic volunteer.

Managing Traditional Volunteering

Managers have ample resources to assess and enhance their management of the traditional volunteer programs. Important elements include:

- History and tradition are important parts of the program for volunteer activities. Volunteers like to consider their involvement as being part of a continuum of service.

- The organizational structure is usually hierarchical, and the volunteer program may have a similar structure. Managers need to identify program leaders, reporting mechanisms and why said mechanisms work for this program and clients served.

- Traditional volunteers come to expect that the work done is predictable, with material ready when they arrive and clearly identified lines of supervision — the fewer the surprises the better.

- Change is incremental. Traditional volunteers want to be included when the organization undergoes a change process.

- The organization determines needs, and the volunteer program enacts them. Regular communication via newsletters, e-mail and phone calls between the organization and traditional volunteers provides continuity and cements the relationship. These activities reinforce stability and orderliness.

- Traditional volunteers typically welcome outward expressions of appreciation for their service that reflect history and ritual.

Implications for Management

- *Defined job responsibilities.* Managers should provide volunteering groups, including those who provide short-term traditional service, with a brief position description. This information includes the qualifications to do the task, the time required, the numbers of hours dedicated to training, the specific duties of the volunteer and the benefits to the volunteer of performing the tasks described.

- *Screening.* Traditional volunteers often provide service where they are privy to confidential information or to project work with vulnerable populations. Most traditional programs use applications, interviews and reference checks, and some do background checks of criminal records.

- *Supervision/Contact.* Volunteer resource managers or paid staff persons should supervise traditional volunteers. Each supervisor needs to understand the motivation of volunteers, how to direct and guide volunteer workers, and what recordkeeping is essential for the program. The biggest part of the job of the supervisor is communication — both electronic and personal.

- *Recognition.* Acknowledgement of the work of traditional volunteers can be formal or informal. It is the daily “Thank you for coming today,” but it is also a certificate or plaque that itemizes hours or services donated. ♦

Serendipitous Volunteering

A serendipitous volunteer is the person who wanders into an office and says, “I have a few hours. I believe in what you do. Put me to work.” They want to work at a particular moment with a flexible “supervisor” and a loose organizational structure. The person might come back to work again, maybe in a week, maybe next month or maybe next year. Like their traditional counterparts, serendipitous volunteers prefer stability and incremental change in their volunteering and appear near the base of the stability-to-radical change continuum of the Multi-Paradigm Model.

This type of volunteering has been around for a long time, but rarely discussed as a type of activity to be “managed.” It’s often considered an irregular form of volunteering. The growing number of this type of volunteer, however, is demanding the attention of administrators of volunteer programs.

Timing and tasks are important to the serendipitous volunteer. How the tasks are carried out is the key to this type of volunteering. It is not so much the type of work as how the volunteer gets the work done. Tasks need to be available when the volunteer is available. In addition, the individual likes to be in an interactive group that might even contribute to the form and process of the work project. Thus those drawn serendipitously to volunteering would not enjoy giving service in the orderly, tidy fashion of the traditional volunteer. Flexibility is the watchword of the serendipitous volunteer.

Thousands of instances of

serendipitous volunteering occurred following the 2005 hurricanes of Katrina and Rita. Postings began to appear on Craigslist.org the day Katrina reached land, and they offered housing and assistance. A forum was formed to help find missing people before any organized method was developed. Volunteers from churches and companies, as well as individual volunteers as part of organized efforts or not, loaded supplies into trucks and cars and headed for Mississippi and New Orleans.

Similarly, in the days immediately following the earthquake in Afghanistan, TechSoup.org began online discussions regarding how to use the same type of programming that was used in Houston after Katrina to build systems to reconnect families in Afghanistan.

These serendipitous volunteers jumped into action in unconventional ways in response to a perceived need, based on beliefs in the power of communal responses. They received benefits that are highly personal and unexpected.

Examples of Serendipitous Volunteering

- Volunteers serving on an occasional basis (sometimes repeated) for organizations. Time is flexible, and so are the people wanting to give this type of service.

- Individuals organizing teams of people to address an issue or problem. They usually work with an existing organization, but under a loose connection. Excess oversight is likely to drive the serendipitous volunteer away. Volunteers need to have an idea about service and then

figure out how to provide it on their own or with a small group.

Managing Serendipitous Volunteers

- Volunteers need to design their own tasks or service, in consultation with the organization. Rather than providing a formal position description, managers might meet with volunteers to flesh out expectations on both sides and gain an understanding of what is possible. The true serendipitous volunteer is at the end of the stability-to-radical change continuum. These are not people who are into “rocking the boat,” but instead deliver service in their own way and in their own time.

- Seeking consensus in decision making and hearing all perspectives must become the norm in the program’s culture. Serendipitous volunteers have little patience with those who dictate to them. Gentle guidance, mostly in the form of questions and sharing of information, is the preferred method of supervision.

- The coordinator of volunteers must be able to recognize and be comfortable with few absolutes. The manager who has learned to coordinate traditional volunteers effectively needs to shift gears and learn to live with a looser structure and oversight to coordinate serendipitous volunteers.

- It is useful to connect the volunteer work to real-world problems and to allow volunteers to draw upon real world solutions or experiences through their joint creativity. ♦

Social-Change Volunteering

Unlike the more steady traditional and serendipitous volunteers, the social-change volunteers are at the top of the stability-to-radical change continuum. This volunteer seeks something radically new — a system, a program, a service, based on his/her perceptions of the unmet needs of members, clients or communities. The person does not necessarily need to have a specific job assignment in an organizational context to begin working.

Change and action are the goal, and the person derives self-fulfillment from pursuing roadways to empowerment, participating with groups of people to revolutionize the way in which programming or services are done. They are motivated by innovation and change, and seek to create new systems and solutions for existing problems.

Like a tinker, they have a desire to adjust and experiment with new approaches, products and services that will make the final outcome better than it currently is — and they believe there is an ultimate outcome to pursue. This outcome serves as a guiding force for them. Their internal drive thrives on the challenge of making something new work and contributing to the larger society. Social-change volunteers are cause-oriented and sometimes impatient to make or begin large structural changes.

Social-change volunteering is a worldwide phenomenon. There are people who advocate and agitate to bring about social order. There are examples from Arizona to Japan of citizens working aggressively to

solve social or community problems. Volunteers in Arizona founded the Minutemen group to assist the U.S. Border Patrol in stopping the illegal border crossings. New chapters of the group now exist in Washington State, where volunteers patrol the state's northern border with Canada and the Straits of Juan de Fuca for drug smugglers and terrorists.

Examples of Social-Change Volunteering

- Volunteers who organize groups to patrol the Internet and Web for sexual predators. These loosely connected volunteers work with local police, often being advised on such things as entrapment.
- Faith volunteers who move outside their traditional models and establish alternative groups dedicated to social change. For example, there is a new association for Christian churches that is working to launch a faith-based initiative to address environmental issues such as global warming and recycling.
- Advocates who organize efforts to change laws or policies to make social change for the benefit of society, as the volunteers view it.
- Members of social movement organizations that seek to change existing institutional structures. Some volunteers believe that changing the structure of the organization can better meet the mission or purpose of the organization.

Managing Social-Change Volunteers

- Value is placed on actions and

results because these volunteers respond to challenges and high expectations. Passive activities that require sitting or repetition are of little or no interest to these volunteers.

- Conflict is expected and can serve as a strong motivator for these volunteers. People who are motivated by influencing social change know that there will be people who disagree with them. Frequently it is a motivation to know he/she is “stirring up the waters” on the path to social change. The social-change volunteer manager can help volunteers creatively address conflict to better the goals of the work.

- Ample room must be given for the development of new strategies and tactics for social change. Those who fall into this category of volunteering are often turned away by organizations with a traditional base, being perceived as dangerous and out of control. Given attention and freedom to develop their ideas, the social-change volunteer can bring vitality to a stale program.

- Individuals and groups must be organized to address what they consider to be pressing needs and move to gather others to address the issues. Social-change volunteers are most often leaders of like-minded volunteers.

- A manager of volunteers who is comfortable with conflict and the promotion of social causes can work most effectively with this type of volunteer. The challenge of modern management of volunteers is versatility in working with people with vastly different motivations and agendas. ♦

Entrepreneurial Volunteering

The extreme form of entrepreneurial volunteering is the one least likely to respond to conventional management strategies. The most radical of volunteers are often individualized versions of the social-change volunteers and similarly are at the summit of the stability-to-radical change continuum of the Multi-Paradigm Model. They regard themselves as self-appointed doers of good. They act outside of the boundaries of organized or formalized volunteer programs, with an intense personal desire to do justice their way. Just as social change volunteers make transformative change by working in groups, entrepreneurial volunteers enact change by working individually.

Entrepreneurial volunteers find what's not working and move toward empowerment solutions, but they do not need to join with groups to do their work. Created by individual volunteers, the PeopleFinder software system is an excellent example of entrepreneurial volunteering. The Internet and World Wide Web allow people to solve problems, create processes and address issues; no volunteer program or nonprofit needs to be involved. The most radical of the entrepreneurial volunteers are individualized versions of the social-change volunteers with a maverick focus.

The entrepreneurial volunteer works outside the existing system but can cooperate with an organization to benefit its mission or to radically change or challenge the conventional way of doing things. This volunteer is more to the middle of the subjectivism-to-objectivism continuum.

As an example, a state natural resource department sponsors a beach clean-up. The refuse is hauled to locations for pick-up. An entrepreneurial volunteer envisions revenue in the litter. This person collects the debris, sets up a "store" to sell the refuse to artists and others who could use the "junk" for something else, and uses the money from the sale to fund more clean-ups. This person is an entrepreneurial volunteer because he did the work on his own time without personal gain. The organization benefited from the entrepreneurial activity, yet a coordinator did not manage the person in any way.

In organizations that want volunteers to fit their definitions of what it means to volunteer, the entrepreneur will not fit. In fact, entrepreneurs who try to work with an organization are often rebuffed, thus leaving and going it alone. Managers and organizations historically have not learned how to deal with these volunteers nor understand how such lone activities fit with volunteering. Meanwhile entrepreneurs work hard on their own time without compensation to facilitate radical change one person at a time.

Examples of Entrepreneurial Volunteering

- Disaster relief volunteers who by-pass existing service structures to volunteer and single-handedly get things done. This is most evident in people who moved to develop new programs, systems or services to address the needs of those impacted by disasters.

- Volunteers who use cyberspace discoveries to overcome technological challenges and enjoy working alone, such as the volunteers who created the PeopleFinder software system.

- Volunteers who independently engage in radical experimentation outside of respected boundaries and seek alternative solutions to benefit individuals. For centuries, entrepreneurs have broken with mainstream denominations to found new faith-based groups.

Managing Entrepreneurial Volunteers

- These types of volunteers typically cannot be easily managed and will be unhappy in traditionally organized volunteer programs with forms, applications and discussions about service.

- While it is possible in the other three volunteering forms to recruit and engage volunteers in a proactive way, it is unlikely that a candidate for entrepreneurial volunteering can be recruited. An organization would be lucky to have this type of volunteer contact them before embarking on a new endeavor. It is possible, however, to recruit an entrepreneurial volunteer for special tasks that involve independent work and substantive change.

- The idea of managing an entrepreneurial program may be an oxymoron because these types of volunteers work independently. They neither seek nor appreciate being managed and are nonconformists. But they may be willing to lend their ideas to a cause if allowed to work independently. ♦